DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 246 535 EA 016 986

AUTHOR Catterall, James S.; Brizendine, Emily
TITLE Proposition 13: Effects on High School Curricula, 1979-1983.
INSTITUTION Stanford Univ., Calif. Inst. for Research on Educational Finance and Governance.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO IFG-Prog-R-84-B5
PUB DATE May 84
NOTE 38p.; Also supported by funds from the University of California at Berkeley, Children's Time Study.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Curriculum Development; Faculty Workload; *Financial Problems; Public Schools; *Reduction in Force; *Resource Allocation; *Retrenchment; Secondary Education; *Secondary School Curriculum; *State Curriculum Guides; State Standards; Tables (Data)
IDENTIFIERS Proposition 13 (California 1978)

ABSTRACT

This study traces the 5-year effects of California's Proposition 13 on the state's "Big Eight" school districts' secondary curriculum. Personnel and parent representatives agree on influences behind curriculum change patterns. First, teacher reductions have led to larger and fewer sections of classes, decreasing students' scheduling options. Legislation requiring proficiency tests for graduation, as well as legislative and board demands for basic skills development, have also affected course offerings. There are, in addition, losses in materials, equipment, and support services. Specific course casualties include music and driver education, and while special education and remedial offerings have grown, many offerings that extend beyond core requirements have been eliminated. The result is that the old enriched academic experience may only be available to those enrolled in private schools. In the year since the study, legislated curricular changes (additional fine arts courses required for graduation, for example) have combined with brightened economic circumstances, but the effect on either the nature or flexibility of the curriculum remains uncertain. The report includes a two-page bibliography and two appendixes. (KS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED246535

IFG

Institute for Research on Educational Finance and Governance

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Program Report No. 84-B5

PROPOSITION 13: EFFECTS ON HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULA, 1979-1983

James S. Catterall
and
Emily Brizendine

May 1934

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

EA 016 986

Program Report No. 84-B5

PROPOSITION 13: EFFECTS ON HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULA, 1979-1983

James S. Catterall
and
Emily Brizendine

May 1984

James S. Catterall is Assistant Professor of Education, Graduate School of Education, UCLA.

Emily Brizendine is a Bush Foundation Fellow, Graduate School of Education, UCLA.

The research for this report was supported by funds from the National Institute of Education (Grant No. NIE-G-83-0003), and the Children's Time Study, University of California at Berkeley. The analyses and conclusions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of these organizations.

INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON EDUCATIONAL
FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

The Institute for Research on Educational Finance and Governance is a Research and Development Center of the National Institute of Education (NIE) and is authorized and funded under authority of Section 405 of the General Education Provisions Act as amended by Section 403 of the Education Amendments of 1976 (P.L. 94-482). The Institute is administered through the School of Education at Stanford University and is located in the Center for Educational Research at Stanford (CERAS).

The research activity of the institute is divided into the following program areas: Finance and Economics; Politics; Law; and Organizations. In addition there are a number of other projects and programs in the finance and governance area that are sponsored by private foundations and government agencies which are outside of the special R&D Center relationship with NIE.

Abstract

This paper discusses the relationships between fiscal stress placed on public schools in California after the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, and changes observed in urban high school curricula in the past five years. The general ties between finance and curriculum are presented, then specific influence of the tax limitation measure on California school finance is suggested, and an empirical assessment of curriculum changes in the state's "Big Eight" school districts is reported. Secondary curriculum superintendents and a sample of teachers, counselors, and parents in each district were interviewed for this research. The principal findings include nearly universal perceptions of reductions in course offerings in similar areas across all study districts, and a common understanding of intimate ties between financial pressures and these changes.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to thank Gary Sykes of Stanford University for his extensive and thoughtful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

Nowhere has the drama of the tax limitation movement played longer than in California, even though its voters inaugurated a nationwide tax revolt with the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978. Local agencies dependent on property taxes were spared immediate shock six years ago because a huge and growing state budget surplus replaced lost tax collections almost dollar for dollar in the years following the tax cut. And for no institution has the long-run effect been less apparent than for California's schools, which secured a better deal than others at the state capitol as annual bail-out funds were disbursed by the Legislature (Catterall and Thresher, 1979). Yet we are beginning to see the effects of the financial reins applied to the schools as a result of Proposition 13 in the reduced range of services they are now offering to the state's children. What has become of the high school curriculum since 1978 is the subject of this discussion.

This analysis contributes to a comprehensive study of the effects of fiscal containment on services provided to children and youth in the state of California (Medrich and Rubin, 1983). Here we explore the linkages between the financial effects of Proposition 13 on the one hand, and the curriculum offered to children in the state's public schools on the other. That financial hardship readily translates into program reductions needs little documentation for anyone concerned with California schools since 1978, nor for other recipients of the tax revolt (see Collins and Lucove, 1982, discussion of Massachusetts, for example). Of interest to us instead is a richer story. It is a story of curriculum change at a time when both financial strains AND recurring

demands for improved pupil proficiencies were playing upon decision-makers at all levels of the public school system. As we point out in our conclusions, these demands include recent legislative enactments that may reinforce some of the changes we report here. It is also a story of a substantial statewide property tax limit interacting with other major forces shaping California school finance during the past four years. Most important, and at the heart of this discussion, it is a look at just which school-based services are sacrificed, and why, when budgets are squeezed.

At one extreme, rational views of institutional retrenchment suggest that what we find in today's curriculum might be interpreted as an expression of social priorities for schooling--i.e., we retain what is most socially valued when programs are pared. At another extreme, a systems view of schools suggests that curriculum manipulation to accommodate financial losses may be largely governed by what can and cannot be changed by school leaders and policymakers. In practice, both views find some support. A part of what is lost in retrenchment seems to reflect the "expendability" of particular courses of study in the eyes of decisionmakers. And a part more aptly confirms the presence of structural barriers within and surrounding the schools which deny their leaders the freedom to choose what they lose. (See Cibulka, 1982; Phelan, 1983; and Taylor and Imhoff, 1982.)

We suggest here that a longer-term view of responses to fiscal containment is beginning to become apparent in California secondary schools. We have chosen to focus on high schools for several reasons--because of the wide range of services they have provided to youth, because these services complement or overlap with those provided by

non-school agencies (a topic of companion works cited above), and because the differentiated programs at this level appear to have been systematically picked-apart in California as funds have grown short. The results and rationales of this selection process are of great interest to us. In contrast, and with some inconvenience to researchers, elementary school programs typified by self-contained grade-level classrooms do not display their curricula as readily and will not be probed in any depth here, although important changes in their offerings have surely accompanied those we are examining.

Our view of school program change under the fiscal stresses caused by tax limitation has developed from a broader conception of curriculum policymaking in public education--so we first must acknowledge that various forces play either steadily or episodically on curriculum decisionmakers. (See Wirt and Kirst, 1983, p. 153-162; also Eisner and Vallance, 1974.) But the heart of our task is to describe the role of finance more generally as a contributor to this larger picture, and within this realm, the impact of Proposition 13 on curriculum-relevant aspects of California school finance. We also examine specific changes that have taken place in California secondary school curricula since 1978 as revealed to us in interviews with key informants in the state's largest school districts. In this empirical exploration, we asked a small and select sample of curriculum superintendents, school counselors, teachers, and parent leaders to present their views of which offerings have changed and why in their high schools, and their impressions of where finances have played a critical role in these decisions. The power of this exploratory strategy is admittedly limited, but some interesting suggestions garnered consensus in the process.

Finance and the Curriculum

The overriding connection between school finance and school curriculum is obvious. Resources in the form of people, materials, and facilities are the very stuff of curriculum, and school finance systems deliver and distribute resources to the schools. Finance influences both what is offered to pupils and how offerings are organized and conducted. And finance change guarantees curriculum change, if only because none of the critical curriculum actors are immune to its logic.

The recent history of change in overall support for schools in California shows us both edges of the financial sword, as do similar experiences in many of the nation's school systems. Historical growth gave way to decline in the 1970s, and Proposition 13 in California sharpened the economic downturn for the state's schools.

Financial Boom . . . and Bust in California

In the decades leading up to the 1970s, California schools were buoyed by the state's population influx and fertility, and especially by the post World War II baby boom which delivered a succession of ample pupil cohorts to the school yard. The schools were built up to accommodate advancing numbers of children, and the institutions appear to have taken advantage of certain economies of scale in the process. New pupils meant added financial resources in a system generally driven by pupil numbers. And where financial growth was not met by immediate needs for investments in fixed resources such as school facilities, more money led to new program capacity, decisionmaking flexibility, and the diversification of the curriculum in the secondary schools.

During this period, forces in league with financial comfort ensured the expansion of courses and services in California high schools. State mandates for everything from driver education to multi-cultural awareness brought sundry newcomers to the curriculum. State and federal programs which aimed extra money at specific pupil populations led to courses of instruction designed for their needs. Demands for curriculum "relevance" in the latter 1960s resulted in an increase in elective or alternative ways to engage students in learning--if English III was failing in the school marketplace, perhaps the Counterculture as Literature would catch on. And a general interest among educators in enabling secondary students to create individualized programs which would match their educational experiences to their interests and talents also supported the expansion of the curriculum.

Further, the well-staffed, highly educated, and very activist California legislature also contributed to the proliferation of programs and experiments in the state's schools. An opinion smugly held in education policy circles by the end of the 1960s was that the elapsed time between the appearance of an idea in a national education journal and its legislation into the California State Education Code averaged about three months. While this has never been verified scientifically, the code now warrants ten volumes, thousands of pages, and a dusty corner of district office bookshelves because of its unwieldy character.

The reverse edge of the public finance sword began to gleam at California schools in the early 1970s. Just as growth had afforded flexibility and additions to the school curriculum, withdrawal of financial support hit hard at what the schools had built up in the previous era. Proposition 13 may ultimately be viewed as a watershed for

California's local institutions, but for the schools it merely reinforced a long-evident turnaround. Elementary and secondary enrollments both in the state and nationally have declined steadily since 1971 at about 2 percent per year. Also during this time, the percentage of school bond elections succeeding at the polls began to plummet, cutting off another important source of revenues. And to conspire with these losses, the California legislature began putting the financial brakes on the state's higher spending school districts in 1974 as a result of the Serrano vs. Priest judicial decisions; judgments in this case had twice rendered the California school finance system unconstitutional because of its inequitable dependence on local property tax wealth.

But even with the fiscally dampening effects of these trends and decisions during the decade, nearly all California's school district budgets managed to keep up with increases in the state's living costs through augmented receipts, both in absolute and per-pupil terms, from year to year throughout the 1970s. The state's economy remained healthy, which brought surplus funds to the treasury each year, some of which ended up in the schools through growth of state school support. In addition, real property values increased typically 10 to 15 percent annually across the state throughout the decade, and by even more in some school districts. This drove up property tax collections, another important source of funds for schools. On balance, the schools of California were getting neither richer nor poorer when Proposition 13 passed in June of 1978.

Proposition 13 and School Finance

Through its provisions restricting tax rates and assessment growth, Proposition 13 had the immediate effect of cutting real property tax revenues statewide by more than half. At the time, this meant that 1978-79 school budgets would have fallen 25 to 30 percent short of their anticipated levels in the absence of replacement revenues, and that local agencies more dependent on property taxes than the schools would face even deeper cuts. Fortunately, the state treasury surplus, eyed by the sponsors of Proposition 13 as a source of tax relief, enabled the state legislature to bail out these agencies, although no one knew how long the state's economy would afford the continuance of massive state assistance. At least one change for school funding became clear: The state legislature through its actions was now to be the annual arbiter of school finance, and districts would now have to submit to state-level decisions governing the exact dollar amounts of general revenues available to them.

The precise effect of the tax slashing measure on the level of school support in the ensuing years is problematic, since overall public support for institutions is influenced by a variety of factors. Changes in economic conditions, changing priorities of legislators and school trustees, altered patterns of federal school support, and variable willingness of voters to tax themselves all interact, and this tends to confound analysts in their desire to explain the independent effects of any of them.

We do know the financial fortunes that California schools have experienced since Proposition 13, and the fact that levels of real support have declined in these years does not appear to be a coincidence.

The post tax-cut years lie in significant contrast to those leading up to them.

Table 1 shows what has actually occurred from year to year since Proposition 13 as the California legislature has appropriated general operating funds to the state's school districts. In the first school year after Proposition 13, 1978-79, the state bail-out allowed the average district to just maintain its previous year's level of general revenues. This translated to a small increase in per-pupil terms because of continuing enrollment declines. In the two years which followed, continued growth of state revenues permitted appropriations affording 8 and 10 percent budget increases for school districts in general and per

Table 1

General California School Revenue Growth
Since Proposition 13 in Context[1]

School Year	Average Growth of General School Revenues from Previous Year		Conservative Historical Growth Pattern	Average General Price Inflation
	Total	Per Pupil		
1978-79	0-1%	3%	8%	9%
1979-80	8%	10%	8%	9%
1980-81	8%	10%	8%	9%
1981-82	3%	5%	8%	9%
1982-83	0%	2%	8%	9%
Compounded Growth	21%	33%	50-60%	60-70%

[1]Revenues excluding Federal and State Categorical Programs; based on net block grants from state to districts; source: Office of Associate Superintendent for Administration, California State Department of Education.

pupil terms respectively. The succeeding two years were much leaner for the schools because of a general economic recession and the exhaustion of the treasury's accumulated surplus. This yielded minimal growth in per-pupil funding between 1981 and 1983.

As of 1982-83, the fifth school year since Proposition 13 passed, general revenues for California schools have fallen far short of what might have been expected if previous patterns of revenue growth had been maintained, and actual school budgets fall even further short of allowing schools to keep up with general increases in the cost of living. General per pupil expenditures have increased about 33 percent in these years, whereas they might have been expected to increase by somewhat more than 50 percent during this time according to historical patterns. Meanwhile, the general cost of living in the state has progressed by more than 60 percent. The net effect of these years on school finance appears to be that California's schools now have about 20 percent less real resources per pupil than they had in 1978, and have overall budgets 25 percent below those of 1978 in real terms.

The role of Proposition 13 in this pattern results from its several provisions: (1) the removal of nearly $6 billion immediately from overall tax collections in the state, (2) the loss of progressively increasing annual tax collections if assessments had been allowed to inflate with property values, and (3) from the measure's effective abolition of local tax increases to assist the schools. In effect, the taxing authority that Proposition 13 removed from public officials in California would have been able to more than make-up for the schools' budget shortfalls illustrated in Table 1 and could have eliminated as well the deficits experienced in other local agencies. A continuation

of total tax collections at pre-Proposition 13 levels could have provided for school revenue growth at levels previously experienced and at rates approximating those of general cost inflation. These would-have-been tax collections plus the giant state revenue surplus could have combined to create a very robust public finance picture statewide. In short, Proposition 13 appears to have cut deeply into real school resources.

This portrayal of school finance patterns in California is not complete, since districts do have revenues in addition to the block grants provided from year to year by the state. Federal funds and state categorical programs for a variety of special needs pupils account for varying amounts of district spending beyond the general assistance just described. For districts without substantial participation in these programs, the block grants account for nearly their entire annual budgets. Urban districts are major participants in these programs, and their overall budgets per pupil far exceed the block grants. For example, the Los Angeles Unified School District's state block grant accounted for only about $1850 of the more than $3000 budgeted per pupil for 1981-82. But since the funds beyond state block grants are tied to specific programs, the general revenue patterns we have described are highly pertinent to many discretionary curriculum decisions that school districts have made in recent years, and these changes are what we hope to describe. We must acknowledge that federal funding changes over this time period would be expected to impact these curricular decisions in ways that we do not specifically isolate. Funding for all elementary and secondary federal programs had annual appropriation growth rates steadily reduced from about 13 percent in 1978-80 (over 1978-79) to 7 percent in 1981-82 and even less for 1982-83 (NCES, 1982, p. 173).

Curriculum Change Since Proposition 13

California school finance patterns outlined in the previous section and shown in Table 1 suggest that the curriculum in California schools has been under stiff pressure for the past five years. First, since teacher salaries typically account for more than 80 percent of school expenditures, districts have faced a bind in their relations with teaching staffs. Where teachers have succeeded in securing salary increases of any magnitude, there is pressure to reduce their numbers since this is by far the largest potential source of revenues within district budgets. And where salaries have been held back because of financial hardship, teachers probably become more inclined to seek other employment and fewer are likely to be attracted to the schools as potential replacements. And administrative responses in this dilemma are not entirely within the control of district leaders, because issues of salary scales and teacher retention are subject to collective bargaining agreements reached in concurrence with the teachers themselves. Who must go when layoffs are enacted, and who bails out voluntarily in the meelee would have direct effects on a district's curriculum.

Further, to the extent that the costs of support services and materials have increased on a par with general inflation over these five years--referring to such necessities as office assistance, paper products, transportation, energy, and maintenance supplies--the schools have had to make do with less, since their budgets have not maintained this pace. Areas of the curriculum requiring consumable supplies of any sort, such as science laboratories, manual and creative arts, or organized sports, are likely to have suffered.

While it is widely suggested that effects in each of these expected realms have come to pass in California's schools in recent years, we were surprised to learn that neither state officials nor districts themselves maintain a systematic record of what the schools actually offer to their pupils and how these offerings have changed from year to year. This is probably due primarily to the fact that all schools seem to comfortably exceed the minimal core curricular offerings required over these years by the state's education code; therefore extensive central monitoring practices have not developed. Even high school graduation requirements were left entirely to the discretion of local districts under California law at this time--a situation which has changed dramatically as of 1983-84.

To assess the nature and extent of curricular changes in California secondary schools since Proposition 13, we conducted a survey of personnel and parent representatives in each of the state's "urban" school districts. Organized as the "Big Eight" school districts in California (for their purposes of presenting a unified voice on many state-level education issues which affect them similarly), these districts listed in Table 2 enroll a fourth of the state's school children. We chose these districts because they represent such a large share of the pupil population, and thus we might gain the most from our inquiry resources. The most important limitation of this selection with respect to characterizing the financial circumstances of districts generally in California is the fact that the districts are all comparatively high-spending districts, and this has had an independent effect on their finances because of post-Serrano legislation. The total growth of general revenue in these districts has proceeded more slowly than that in school districts on

average because of continued narrowing-the-gap provisions for spending across school districts in state bailout laws. Perhaps countering this difference (which itself suggests that our sample districts may have suffered more than others), their sheer size might afford these large districts comparative flexibility with certain of their resources; for example, they may be more able to find and transfer staff to cover high priority assignments, or to transfer funds from one program to another to maintain critical services, or to use federal monies in creative ways.

The eight study districts are listed in Table 2, along with selected enrollment and state block grant information for the first school year following Proposition 13 and for the school year 1981-82. (Complete enrollment and state funding data for these districts during this time period appear in Appendix I.) The data indicate that these districts have experienced changes in finance approximating those portrayed as typical California school district finance patterns in Table 1. Both the growth of total state revenues, and the growth of these revenues in per pupil terms appear to average just under those we reported to be expected overall for school districts during the post-Proposition 13 years. San Francisco and Los Angeles schools have fared considerably worse than the other six districts, while the Long Beach school district has substantially increased its overall block grant (but still short of amounts needed to offset inflation) because of its increases in enrollments. Actual block grant figures for the year 1982-83 were unavailable to us, but state school finance legislation for 1982-83 was its most austere in recent memory, and additional growth of state revenues for any of these districts was expected to be minimal or none. So the

Table 2

Study Districts ("The Big Eight")
and Selected Statistics[1]

District	(a) Total Block Grants per pupil 1978-79	(b) 1981-82	(c) Per pupil Budget	(d) Overall Block Grant	(e) ADA 1978-79	(f) 1981-82	(g) ADA Change
Los Angeles	$1621	1897	+17%	+ 7%	576,401	529,600	-8%
San Francisco	1647	1971	+18%	+10%	62,670	58,115	-7%
San Jose	1500	1968	+31%	+16%	37,000	32,622	-12%
San Diego	1407	1833	+30%	+19%	119,705	109,115	-9%
Oakland	1565	1957	+25%	+12%	53,038	47,498	-10%
Long Beach	1446	1849	+28%	+130%	56,355	57,206	+2%
Sacramento	1558	1922	+23%	+14%	41,825	38,864	-7%
Fresno	1384	1811	+31%	+18%	51,572	48,692	-0%

[1]Sources: "California Public Schools, Selected Statistics, 1978-79," State of California Bureau of School Apportionments and Reports. And California State Department of Education, Local Assistance Bureau, for 1981-82 data.

combination of Proposition 13 and a cooling state economy cut substantially into the real resources which these districts could spend per year in their schools.

We interviewed by telephone the following people in each of the eight districts in order to assess the location, extent, and rationale for changes in high school offerings in their districts since the passage of Proposition 13: the assistant superintendent for instruction (or the chief secondary curriculum specialist in cases where we were referred to this office), the head of the district's teacher organization, a counselor

nominated by the principal of a high school selected at random from the state's public school directory, and the president of the district's parent-teacher organization council. We chose this cross section both to get a sampling of curriculum change from a variety of relatively independent vantage points, and also because we began the inquiry with some suspicion that one's perceptions of curriculum change might be influenced by one's position within the schools. What we found instead was a very high level of concensus among our respondents within each district and across all districts as to what was changing and why in their high schools. Our interview questions are appended. The results of our survey are now presented.

Survey Findings

If California's urban districts provide a valid indication, financial constraints imposed upon schools in the past five years have acted along with local and state demands for curricular emphasis on "basic" skills development to substantially alter the range and types of courses of study offered to high school students. Proposition 13, as we just described, contributed to a reduction of the real resources available to school districts of about 25 percent since 1978. Accommodation to these losses was made in all eight of our study districts through reductions of teaching and other staff, restriction of salary growth, and through trimming budgets for materials and support services. Proposition 13 had the additional immediate effect of eliminating nearly all summer school programs. These responses to fiscal constriction were made at the same time that the state legislature and the school boards themselves were calling for increased attention to basic language and quantitative skills in the high school curriculum.

The results of these district accommodations to budget shortfalls, and to mandated reorientations toward the 3Rs in their curricula, can be seen in three major areas: the organization of the high school curriculum, pupil course selection patterns, and in a common and lengthy list of offerings which have either been eliminated or reduced to traces of their former levels. Each of these responses and results is now taken up in more detail.

The most immediate effect of Proposition 13 was the elimination of summer school programs following its passage. This had been threatened during the Proposition 13 campaign by State Superintendent Wilson Riles as a probable response to the tax cut, and the elimination of summer school and adult education programs became a part of the legislature's overall strategy to disrupt as little as possible the "regular" functioning of the state's institutions in the aftermath. (See Catterall and Thresher, 1979.) This left the nearly one-fifth of the state's school children who regularly attended summer school for remedial, required, or enrichment classes without such opportunities; as we discuss below in regard to pupil class selection patterns, this has altered what they choose to study during the regular school year. This perception of the primary impact of the demise of summer programs was offered by nearly all of our respondents.

While neither remedial work nor required classes would themselves be considered expendable frills in the broad scheme of what schools are supposed to do, the organizational position of summer programs made them extremely vulnerable as the legislature groped in 1978 for least painful ways to allocate budget cuts. Summer school lay outside of the core employment agreements between districts and their staffs which would

have required wholesale renegotiation if regular programs were to be raided in efforts to save money. Summer school's loss was much preferred by all parties in the bail-out to the likely alternative--that of laying off district teachers.

But while regular teaching staffs were generally maintained in the year following Proposition 13, repeated reductions in numbers of teachers have been the first order effect of the financial squeeze that plagued the schools in subsequent years. These reductions were effected through teacher lay-offs in two of the eight districts examined and through non-replacement of many retiring or resigning teachers in all study districts. And the processes of attrition were fueled by the financial uncertainties that Proposition 13 engendered.

In the spring of 1979, almost a year after the temporary bailout was passed, most districts sent layoff notices to as many as a third of their faculty members in anticipation of funding losses for the next year. The legislature would not enact its budget until June or July, but by state law teachers must be informed by March 15 if they are not going to be rehired for the following school year. Even though state appropriations allowing for continuation of teaching staff eventually passed in July of 1979, some of the teachers given notice had secured employment elsewhere, and a pattern of staff attrition had taken hold. In the following years, all eight urban districts simply did not replace many teachers who retired or resigned their posts. This has meant that whatever priorities have reigned in the districts over the past few years, the schools have been restricted largely to their existing (and diminishing) teaching staffs for the purposes of carrying them out. We pursue further implications of this for the curriculum shortly.

Overall Patterns of Curriculum Change

As we indicated above, the patterns of curriculum change described by our respondents were characterized by overwhelming similarity--both among the individuals associated with given districts and across the entire sample. And what were identified to be driving influences behind these changes were also practically universal.

At the heart of curriculum change in these districts are reductions in teaching staffs described above. Losses of material resources which support programs are also universal in these districts. In addition, the trustees of nearly all of these districts have mandated a new or continued emphasis on the development of basic language and mathematics skills in their school programs. And finally, the state's institution of proficiency tests for high school graduation is reported to have affected district course offerings. These forces have combined to yield distinct organizational implications for school curricula, universally restricted patterns of pupil choice in high school programs, and lengthy and common lists of deceased or diminished subject offerings.

In addition to teaching staff losses, all districts queried have reduced outlays substantially for curricular materials, equipment, and support services in the past five years. Some classes are conducted with fewer texts than pupils, with books not allowed to be taken from classrooms for study or homework. Laboratory equipment is largely not replaced when broken, nor are obsolete or dated materials upgraded through new purchases. Field trips have been eliminated in most schools. All districts report reductions in numbers of counselors and school psychologists. Budgets have simply not allowed for former numbers of professional psychologists, and teachers serving as counselors have

been reassigned to the classroom as other teachers have departed. Some districts began to charge fees for participation in athletic activities--typically $35.00 for a varsity sport--a practice which subsequent to our survey was ruled illegal in a decision stemming from a court challenge in Santa Barbara (Hartzell v. Connell, 1984). Parent-teacher organizations have successfully orchestrated fee-charging summer programs in several of the districts studied, but these manage to serve small fractions of previous summer enrollments.

These dollar saving strategies--toleration of staff attrition, reassignment of support professionals to the classroom, and curtailing of cash outlays wherever possible--have been executed at the same time that districts have been under both formal and popular pressure to reorient their programs in the direction of basic skills development. Both state law and the actions of school trustees themselves have mandated added attention to the 3Rs in California high schools. In addition, the University of California announced the stiffening of its mathematics course requirements for admission to freshman classes for fall of 1984. All of these forces have constrained choices about the high school curricula as decisions are reached about where to realize needed financial savings.

California has a rugged state requirement for demonstration of pupil competencies for high school graduation, at least by national standards. Through laws enacted in the mid-1970s and effective since 1980, not only must pupils pass a district-established test for high school graduation, but they also must succeed on separate tests for each of reading, written expression, and computation skills. State law also mandates preliminary proficiency assessment at the elementary, junior

high, and high school levels. In addition to whatever actions districts have taken regarding their curricula to contribute to pupil success on their proficiency assessments--such as remedial instruction--districts are required to maintain summer programs specifically for children who fail their tests for graduation.

The boards of trustees of all districts queried have elevated basic skills as a curricular priority through their own mandates. This has taken place both through the articulation of such priorities into basic statements of district instructional goals and philosophies and through the creation of special emphasis on the basics in specific program decisions. Respondents reported these thrusts to be the result of state proficiency testing requirements and also to derive from the same popular forces that gave rise to legislative initiatives for proficiency monitoring in the first place. The perception that schools are under irresistable pressures to improve the basic literacy of their graduates is apparently universal, and curricular decisions described support this contention.

Largely because of reduced numbers of teachers, high school class sizes have grown larger since Proposition 13 and fewer sections of given classes are offered. The latter of these effects has reduced scheduling options for pupils--options which have suffered from additional changes in California high schools. More than half of our study districts have recently reduced the number of class periods each day. And their schedules have been squeezed further by the fact that pupils can no longer enroll in summer programs to take required courses. This has meant that all required courses must be taken during the regular school year; so less time is available for electives. Some districts at the same time

have added to their course requirements for graduation, further impounding discretionary schedule time. Enrollment in remedial classes has increased in response to concerns about passing graduation proficiency tests. By state law, high school students must be given preliminary proficiency tests in the 10th and 11th grades, and districts commonly use the results of these assessments to place marginal or failing pupils into newly established special classes.

The mathematics and science curricula have uniquely suffered from post-Proposition 13 circumstances in the schools. Non-replacement of teaching staff has resulted in teachers being reassigned to serve those areas of the curriculum which have been maintained. School districts have for at least a decade reported difficulty in securing sufficient numbers of qualified math and science teachers, and incapacity to hire new teachers of any sort has exacerbated this problem. All of our study districts admit to growing numbers of non-majors teaching in these areas, and to customarily assigning teachers to teach such courses without the benefit of specific inservice training for lack of resources to provide such opportunities.

Perhaps the most obvious effect of these changes taken together is seen in the nature of the course catalogue of the state's high schools. All districts studied report long lists of classes and specific support activities which have either been eliminated or reduced substantially since 1978. The same classes and general areas of attrition were cited repeatedly, both across the various observers within each of our study districts and across all districts commonly. With few exceptions, the following course offerings have come under fire in the aftermath of Proposition 13:

Table 3

Widely Reported Course Reductions
Urban California High Schools

- honors courses
- advanced placement courses
- social science electives:
  - sociology
  - psychology
  - economics
  - international relations
- English electives
- driver education
- fine and performing arts:
  - orchestra, band, choral music
- foreign languages
- industrial arts:
  - shops
  - drawing
- photography
- home economics
- career education
- business education
- "general track" classes

Areas of Curricular Growth

- special education
- mathematics (particularly computer classes)
- bilingual education (Spanish-English)
- remedial instruction

Class offering reduction or elimination has resulted through all of the forces and responses outlined above. Some specific observations follow: Music and driver education programs are widespread casualties, having been removed completely in most schools. Industrial arts courses have suffered generally by reductions in numbers of sections offered and by the schools' inability to maintain equipment or purchase supplies needed for conducting them. Many pupils are blocked from taking these or other electives which have been reduced to single time offerings, since they frequently conflict with required courses. Honors and advanced placement courses were once offered for small numbers of students, a luxury now considered less affordable. Districts report increased enrollment minima in such classes as calculus or advanced placement chemistry, which have led in turn to their cancellation due to insufficient numbers of takers.

Course consolidation is frequently mentioned as a recent phenomenon, especially in the social sciences and English classes. Districts no longer have sufficient numbers of teachers to offer the range of electives which they built up over the previous decades, nor do pupils have room in their schedules to extend themselves as broadly into such topical studies as the Bible as Literature or international relations. Business and career education programs have suffered systematically from their reported low priority as districts have reassigned existing staff from year to year, and from their waning popularity among students.

A few areas of the curriculum have experienced growth since Proposition 13 in all of the districts studied. Computer classes have entered the mathematics curriculum nearly everywhere, although offerings are customarily limited to brief appreciation treatments or limited hands-on experience with a minimal amount of recently acquired hardware. Special education classes have grown in response to recent federal mandates for school district accommodation to individual educational plans, and from increases in state and federal funding for these programs over what was available in the mid-1970s. And districts report more remedial offerings directed particularly to those pupil competencies assessed on district graduation tests and to deficiencies noted in preliminary competency testing at earlier grade levels.

Some Specific Findings

Our respondents conveyed their understanding of curriculum change in their districts since Proposition 13 in a variety of ways. Their statements usually reflected a general understanding of patterns in the areas queried. Beyond this, they were frequently able to cite known

figures or estimates that are indicative of how much, or little, things have changed in addition to the directions of observed changes. Table 4 below presents these harder assessments for each of the eight districts studied.

The changes listed in Table 4 do not include assessments, such as many discussed above, which told of specific areas of curricular reduction without reference to the magnitude of change. The amount of detail and quantifiable information reported to us varied from district to district, further testifying (it seems) to the lack of systematic record keeping by central offices on the subject of the high school curriculum as we have defined it.

It is also apparent, as we review our notes, that certain districts have fared worse than others over the past five years. Even though similarity of impact is a dominant finding of this research, districts such as San Francisco and Los Angeles have had their troubles compounded by severe enrollment declines. This directly affects the number of teachers maintained on staff, and the cuts in their offerings appear to be the deepest among the districts studied.

Conclusions

Our respondents frequently assessed the curriculum changes in their schools and districts in words that we have some comfort in applying to the larger world of California's urban schools as a result of our survey. A steady withdrawal from the comprehensive, curricularly diverse high school of the early 1970s was the dominant characterization offered. The unquestioned reality of shrinking resources over this five-year period, in part caused by the constraints of Proposition 13, was perceived to be a driving force in this process. And curricular decisions

Table 4

Quantifiable Curriculum Observations in Study Districts

District	Curriculum Change or Consistency, 1978 to 1983
San Francisco Unified School District	1. 40 percent reduction in total class offerings
	2. 1979: 1200 teacher layoffs, 800 subsequently rehired
	3. 1980: 400 permanent teacher layoffs
	4. 1981 and 1982: 100 teachers lost through attrition, no replacements
	5. Elimination of all advanced placement courses if fewer than 12 pupils enrolled
	6. Sample high school: 2 pages of courses eliminated from 6-page course catalog
	7. 10-year pattern of shifting non-majors into mathematics teaching assignments upheld
	8. Elimination of regular summer school.
San Diego City Unified School District	1. Physical education eliminated, grade 12, and made optional, grade 11
	2. 1983: mean age of teachers = 60 years
	3. Mathematics requirement for graduation increased from 1 to 2 years
	4. No changes in length of school day or number of periods
	5. 1983: No new certificated personnel hired
	6. Elimination of summer school.
Los Angeles Unified School District	1. By 1983, 1000 non majors assigned to teach math classes
	2. Credits for graduation reduced to 150 from 165
	3. Cumulative reduction of teaching force of 1500
	4. Sixth period dropped for grades 11 and 12
	5. Elimination of summer school.
San Jose Unified School District	1. One period per day eliminated, grades 11 and 12
	2. Layoffs of teachers with 7 or fewer years of district employment
	3. Reduction of 10 units of credit required for graduation
	4. Reorganization toward 4-year high schools, 2-year middle schools (grades 7 and 8)
	5. Elimination of summer school.

Table 4 (continued)

District	Curriculum Change or Consistency, 1978 to 1983
Oakland Unified School District	1. Additional year of math required for graduation
	2. Additional semester of English required for graduation
	3. One-semester of foreign language exploration course added to graduation requirements
	4. Elimination of summer school.
Sacramento City Unified School District	1. Elimination of all field trips
	2. No replacement of retired/resigned teachers
	3. No inservice appropriations for teachers assigned to mathematics without college major
	4. 1978: 10 percent of teachers laid off
	5. Five additional credits required for graduation
	6. 1978: reduction of class periods to 5 from 6
	7. Cumulative reduction of 30 school psychologists
	8. Elimination of summer school.
Long Beach Unified School District	1. Elimination of mini-courses, all departments
	2. One half of English electives dropped from catalog
	3. Total of 50 elective offerings dropped, all departments
	4. Additional 1 year of English (III) required for graduation
	5. Elimination of summer school.
Fresno Unified School District	1. Additional year of math and science required for graduation
	2. Additional semester of parenting education and career education required for graduation
	3. Increase of required credits for graduation from 225 to 210
	4. Stable number of class periods and length of school day
	5. Elimination of summer school.

at the margin over this time have also reflected directives to maintain and augment programs which would have some hope of resulting in high school graduates who can read, write, and calculate with minimal facility.

High schools seem to have lost their "comprehensiveness" in several ways. They have eliminated many offerings that extend beyond core requirements because they do not have the staff to teach them, and because reduced regular year schedules and cancelled summer programs have expropriated discretionary schedule time. The arts and enrichment courses in all disciplines have been the first to go in this process; some suggest that pupil abilities to use their basic skills to think critically, analytically, or appreciatively have fallen from the school agenda. Work skills classes, such as manual arts training, and business service skills courses such as typing or notehand, have also suffered from low priorities in the eyes of both district decisionmakers and the students themselves. And students who wished to extend themselves beyond the basic core of a secondary education found it increasingly difficult to do so within California's urban high schools.

The primary implication of these changes is that students (and parents) wanting experiences during the high school years which approximate those which were once commonly available were likely to go beyond the public schools to get them. Community service agencies other than schools are a very limited source of such opportunities, and access to private sources of instruction is generally governed by family financial capacity. Thus, comprehensive education in the sense of enriched academic experience may only be available in the more endowed and expensive private schools which are generally oversubscribed in California's urban centers. The distributional consequences of the privatization of services

which were once available more commonly to all children, although the subject of another analysis, seem alarming (see Medrich and Rubin, 1983; also Duke and Cohen, 1983).

We must finally point out that in the year following this research, legislated curricular changes along with brightening economic circumstances are interacting with what we have reported. As a result of 1983 state legislation, school districts must generally increase the number of English, mathematics, social science, science, and fine arts courses required for high school graduation. At the same time, the negative financial trends reported here have been forestalled or reversed by more generous state appropriations enabled by economic recovery. On the one hand, as districts comply with these mandates, more course offerings of the sort identified here could be lost. Additional discretionary schedule time might shrink as pupils enroll in newly required classes; and larger shares of teaching staffs, regardless of professional preparation, might be allocated to required curricular areas. On the other hand, added state appropriations may restore some flexibility to the curriculum. This latter result will depend on how sustained the current economic boom proves to be, on how much of any added appropriations are simply channeled to teacher salaries, and finally on how much support the restoration of recent losses musters as spending decisions are made. Legislative priorities for schools in 1984 do not seem to suggest that added resources will recreate the curriculum of ten years ago. Perhaps the schools will emerge from the period described here in a fashion analogous to that of America's steel industry in the current economic recovery--much of what was lost may simply not be replaced as the enterprise faces a future with altered senses of priority and technology.

REFERENCES

Catterall, J., and Thresher, T. "Proposition 13: The Campaign, the Vote, and the Immediate Aftereffects for California Schools" (Program Report #79-B5). Stanford, CA: Institute for Research on Educational Finance and Governance, March 1979.

Cibulka, James. "Response to Enrollment Loss and Financial Decline in Urban School Systems. Peabody Journal of Education, v. 60, no. 2, pp. 64-78 (Winter 1983).

Collins, John, and Lucove, Jeffrey S.. "Proposition 2½: Lessons From Massachusetts." Educational Leadership, v. 39, no. 4, pp. 246-249 (January 1982).

Duke, Daniel L., and Cohen, Jon S.. "Do Public Schools Have a Future? A Case Study of Retrenchment and Its Implications." Urban Review, v. 15 no. 2, pp. 89-105 (1983).

Eisner, E., and Vallance, E. Conflicting Conceptions of Curriculum. Berkeley: McCutchan, 1974.

Hartzell vs. Connell, 35 Cal., 3 899 (1984)

Lieberman, A. "Practice Makes Policy: The Tensions of School Improvement." In Lieberman and McLaughlin, M. (Eds.), Policy Making in Education. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Medrich, E., and Rubin, V. "Services to Children and the Urban Fiscal Crisis" (Report to the National Institute of Education). Berkeley, CA: Children's Time Study, 1983.

Phelan, William. "Staffing Policies in Times of Retrenchment: Teacher Opinions." Peabody Journal of Education; v. 60, n. 2, pp. 37-48 (Winter 1983).

Taylor, Bob, and Imhoff, Rhoda F. A. "Retrenchment--The Impact of Declining Enrollments on the Curriculum." NASSP Bulletin, v. 66, n. 455, pp. 112-115 (September 1982).

Wirt, F. & Kirst, M. Schools in Conflict. Berkeley: McCutchan, 1982.

National Center for Education Statistics. Digest of Education Statistics 1982. Washington, DC: The Center, 1982.

REVENUE STATISTICS FOR SELECTED CALIFORNIA SCHOOL DISTRICTS
1978-79 through 1981-82

	ADA	Base Rev. Limit Per ADA	Total Base Revenue Limit	Min. Rev. Limit Guarantee Amount	Urban Impact Aid Amount	Declining Enrollment Revenue	Total of These Rev. Sources	Local Revenues
Los Angeles Unified								
1978-79	535,262	$1,523	$815,193,321	0	$20,930,973	$36,733,812	$872,858,706	$284,837,130
1979-80	526,795	1,646	867,141,116	0	30,523,304	33,817,696	931,482,116	155,795,026
1980-81	521,228	1,766	921,572,802	0	30,990,302	16,405,935	968,969,039	164,241,345
1981-82	525,052	1,885	989,568,600	0	32,849,713	0	1,022,418,313	285,376,541
San Francisco Unified								
1978-79	58,517	$1,789	$104,672,284	0	$3,234,115	$5,428,445	$113,334,844	$44,999,053
1979-80	55,455	1,894	105,005,437	0	4,536,198	7,680,239	117,222,874	14,165,033
1980-81	56,692	2,001	113,445,734	0	4,638,937	3,029,665	121,114,396	14,939,856
1981-82	58,184	1,961	114,086,605	0	4,917,273	0	119,003,878	34,680,722
San Jose Unified								
1978-79	35,186	$1,542	$54,244,145	0	$356,291	$1,774,837	$56,375,273	$20,739,116
1979-80	33,676	1,663	55,344,245	0	530,943	2,478,213	59,353,401	19,724,352
1980-81	32,363	1,800	58,237,542	0	530,943	3,627,495	62,395,980	22,143,780
1981-82	32,272	1,911	61,654,680	0	562,800	1,732,805	63,950,293	27,105,848
Oakland Unified								
1978-79	49,018	$1,579	$77,380,795	0	$2,924,158	$2,157,170	$82,462,123	$26,817,968
1979-80	47,740	1,697	81,031,765	0	4,133,854	1,617,594	86,783,213	12,850,462
1980-81	47,136	1,803	84,970,653	0	4,214,994	2,078,880	91,264,527	13,939,885
1981-82	46,948	1,924	90,345,792	0	4,467,894	687,004	95,500,690	22,749,073
San Diego City Unifed								
1978-79	112,110	$1,426	$159,810,563	0	$1,263,427	$4,593,212	$165,667,202	$67,856,674
1979-80	109,095	1,557	169,858,422	0	1,882,754	6,150,071	177,891,247	67,938,554
1980-81	108,872	1,690	184,003,479	0	1,882,754	2,574,981	188,461,214	80,947,199
1981-82	109,116	1,830	199,667,004	0	1,995,719	0	201,662,723	95,718,876
Long Beach Unified								
1978-79	54,215	$1,463	$79,340,942	0	$1,021,104	$1,869,135	$82,231,181	$27,447,232
1979-80	53,803	1,592	85,629,308	0	1,521,645	902,408	88,053,361	14,480,607
1980-81	55,360	1,736	96,124,890	0	1,521,645	0	97,646,535	15,324,794
1981-82	56,613	1,848	104,605,539	0	1,612,944	0	106,218,483	23,524,074
Sacramento City Unified								
1978-79	39,423	$1,544	$60,885,275	0	$1,171,584	$2,401,670	$64,458,529	$18,000,870
1979-80	38,228	1,666	63,678,772	0	1,672,929	2,363,742	67,715,443	12,542,196
1980-81	38,376	1,803	69,201,522	0	1,699,413	809,052	71,709,987	14,010,313
1981-82	38,766	1,912	74,130,284	0	1,801,378	0	75,931,562	19,135,209
Fresno Unified								
1978-79	48,724	$1,367	$66,619,838	0	$1,479,374	$3,539,456	$71,688,668	$19,058,742
1979-80	46,811	1,504	70,421,399	0	2,109,785	3,905,885	76,437,069	17,328,362
1980-81	46,357	1,661	77,017,520	0	2,144,159	1,598,296	80,759,975	18,659,402
1981-82	46,732	1,796	83,916,652	0	2,272,806	0	86,189,458	23,817,240

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82
State Income--General Fund (In Thousands)	$16,250,774	$18,534,148	$21,104,852	$21,692,782

source: State of California, Dept. of Finance: special run courtesy to author.

2950A/8749G

Appendix II: Curriculum Change Interview Questions

1. What is your perception of changes in high school course offerings in your district, 1978 to present?

   Which specific areas have been affected and why?

2. Has your school board mandated major curriculum changes or changes of emphasis since 1978?

3. Has teaching staff attrition caused any systematic curriculum change?

   Are these retirements?
   resignations?
   reductions in force?

   What areas have been losers?

4. Did your district cancel summer school in 1978? Are there any summer offerings now? (Note, state law requires provision for summer school for those who fail proficiency exams, for special education purposes, and for high school completion.)

   Do you now have any cooperative arrangements, such as with the Parks Dept.?

   Any planned changes in summer offerings?

5. Have there been any changes in graduation requirements?

   Have there been changes in grade level promotion requirements?

6. Have there been any changes in length of school day or number of class periods?

   With what effect?

7. How have school finance circumstances generally affected curricular offerings in your district since 1978?

8. Do you discern any pattern of change in relations with other youth service agencies in the community? e.g., parks and recreation?